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Arts & Resilience in a Rural Community

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Motivation for this study

In today's world, many communities are facing economic, social and environmental challenges such as unemployment, closure of local facilities and services, depopulation, ageing and extreme weather events (see, e.g., Davoudi, 2012; Rogers & Spokes, 2003; Steiner & Markantoni, 2013). Though the state of 'perceived uncertainty about global futures' that these challenges cause may not be historically exceptional, it stimulated the current interest in the notion of *resilience* (Brice & Fernández Arconada, 2018, p. 225). In the past decades, this term has gained currency in both practice, where it is increasingly used in government policy and strategies (Porter & Davoudi, 2012; Shaw, 2012), and in academia, where it receives considerable attention from a broad range of disciplines, including engineering and ecology, planning, disaster studies, political sciences, psychology, economics and geography (see, e.g. Davoudi, 2018; Pendall et al., 2010; White & O'Hare, 2014). Nowadays, resilience is widely promoted as a promising concept for dealing with uncertainties in the face of economic, social and environmental challenges (van der Vaart et al., 2015) and it has become 'a new powerful lens through which researchers and practitioners assess, discuss and make plans for major matters' (Trell et al., 2018, p. 8).

The question of how to achieve resilience has become a matter of significance at societal and communal levels (Brice & Fernández Arconada, 2018; Davoudi, 2018). White & O'Hare (2014), however, observed that resilience policy and practice to date are still mostly focused on a rather narrow technorational approach and appear to resist more abstract evolutionary approaches (see also Porter & Davoudi, 2012). They noted that in policies, there 'is an overwhelming tendency to interpret resilience as an "engineered" response, where risk is countered in an equilibrist, atomised manner with the definitional concerns and sociocultural aspects mostly unacknowledged' (p. 945). In contrast, Boon et al. (2012) stressed that policies and initiatives should also recognize the importance of 'social connectedness' in building community resilience. They argued that local community programs that increase a community's sense of place and foster stronger links between community members also deserve attention. This thesis builds on this and contributes to resilience thinking by looking at *arts-based community activities* as a potential resource for building community resilience, thereby, giving attention to socio-cultural resources.

The focus of this thesis on arts-based community activities in resilience-building aligns with a trend of the last decades involving increased attention for the value of the arts for communities in general, beyond their aesthetic qualities (Eernstman & Wals, 2013). Scholars noted the value of the arts in connection to: providing opportunities for social interaction, networking and improving understanding and links between people, hence, contributing to a community's social capital (see, e.g., Jones et al., 2013;

Kay, 2000; Matarasso, 2007; Newman et al, 2003); helping to articulate and strengthen links between communities and places (see, e.g., Anwar McHenry, 2011; Jones et al., 2013; Morris & Cant, 2004; Mulligan et al., 2006); increasing economic activity (see, e.g., Anwar McHenry, 2009; Azmier, 2002; Grodach, 2009; Newman et al., 2003; Phillips, 2004); contributing to a range of individual skills and qualities in many areas, including growing self-confidence, self-expression and communication, and project management and teamwork competencies (see, e.g., Kay, 2000; Matarasso, 2007; Mattingly, 2001; Mulligan et al., 2006); giving visibility and voice to those members of society who are rarely heard (see, e.g., Johnston & Pratt, 2010; Mulligan et al., 2006); and encouraging and enabling civic participation and strengthening a community's capacity to act (see, e.g., Anwar McHenry, 2009, 2011; Bradley et al., 2004; Rogers & Spokes, 2003; Wali et al., 2002).

Recently, the value of the arts has also been mentioned in connection to building resilient communities, as colleagues and myself observed (van der Vaart et al., 2015). Kay (2000), for instance, highlighted the role that *participatory arts projects* can play in helping communities deal with challenges they face. He stated that 'local people [...] engage together, develop social and economic skills and assume the power to fashion their future' (p. 415), thus fostering a community's adaptive capacities. On a similar note, Anwar McHenry (2009) proposed that the arts have a so-called 'survival value', by providing the innovation necessary for communities to cope with change (see also Anwar McHenry, 2011; Burnell, 2012; Derrett, 2008).

The aim of this thesis is to explore the value of arts-based community activities for resilience-building. By looking into this matter from several perspectives, insight into their role in community resilience is generated. The thesis draws on a participatory research project that used a mix of creative and arts-based research methods that was conducted in the village of Pingjum in the Netherlands. In exploring the value of arts-based community activities for community resilience, this thesis addresses various themes connected to the relation between arts-based community activities and community resilience: the various dimensions of social capital that participatory community arts can generate (Chapter 2), the binding and dividing effects of the arts on communities (Chapter 3), and the role of the arts in people's emotional connections to landscape and their coping with (potential) place change (Chapter 4). In addition, through reflecting on the conducted participatory research project, the thesis contributes to the discussion on the value of creative and arts-based research methods for researchers, by providing more nuanced, concrete insight into their value (Chapter 5).

This introductory chapter first provides a background to the study by elaborating on community resilience, arts-based community activities, and *why* these could be useful in light of community resilience. Next, the research approach, the research methods and the context of the case study are explained, followed by an outline of the thesis.

1.2 Resilience

Resilience has become a widely used concept in both academia and practice for dealing with changes and uncertainties, as noted earlier. Several scholars, however, have noted the wide variety of interpretations of the concept across and within disciplines (see, e.g., Adger, 2000; Davoudi, 2012, 2018; Hutter & Kuhlicke, 2013; Pendall et al., 2010; Trell et al., 2018; White & O'Hare, 2014). Overall, as Weichselgartner & Kelman (2014, p. 251) observed, a common thread among the various disciplines is 'the ability of materials, individuals, organizations and entire social-ecological systems, from critical infrastructure to rural communities, to withstand severe conditions and to absorb shocks'. A further distinction, however, is often made between *engineering*, *ecological*, and *socio-ecological* or *evolutionary* resilience, which are each briefly discussed below.

Engineering resilience centers around "persistence". This traditional definition of resilience denotes 'the capacity of systems to withstand external shocks and to "bounce-back" to the original stable equilibrium' (Davoudi, 2018, pp. 1-2). Or, as Folke (2006, p. 256) simply put, 'it is about resisting disturbance and change, to conserve what you have'. This interpretation of resilience, with its focus on systems with a single equilibrium, has substantially shaped contemporary natural resource and environment management and is, to date, persistent in many facets of ecology and in the fields of psychology and disaster studies (Folke, 2006; Pendall et al., 2010). In contrast, *ecological resilience* rejects the existence of a single, stable equilibrium and instead, begins from the presumption that a system has multiple equilibria (Davoudi, 2012; Pendall et al., 2010). This resilience conceptualization focuses on whether shocks and disturbances cause a system to move into another regime or behaviour (Simmie & Martin, 2010). Resilience is conceived as 'the *magnitude* of the disturbance that can be absorbed before the system changes its structure' (Holling, 1996, p. 33 in: Davoudi, 2018). A disturbance could have such an effect that instead of returning to the original state, a system moves to an alternative state (Folke et al., 2010). Thus, whereas an engineering perspective is concerned with a single pre-existing equilibrium to which a resilient system "*bounces back*", ecological resilience is concerned with a new equilibrium to which it "*bounces forth*" (Davoudi, 2012). Lastly, *socio-ecological* or *evolutionary* resilience challenges the whole idea of equilibria. These more recent approaches to resilience emphasize "transformability", acknowledging that resilience is an ongoing process and that 'the very nature of systems may change over time with or without external disturbance' (Davoudi, 2012, p. 302). Resilience is not only about being persistent or robust to disturbance but, as Folke (2006)

argued, also involves ‘adaptive capacity [...] that allow[s] for *continuous development*, like a dynamic adaptive interplay between sustaining and developing with change’ (p. 259, emphasis added). In the socio-ecological or evolutionary perspective, resilience is conceived as ‘the ability of complex socio-ecological systems to change, adapt, and crucially, transform in response to stresses and strains’ (Davoudi, 2012, p. 302), which could also come from within the system itself. Importantly, resilience is considered to rest on the ability to ‘be proactive and self-determining, rather than just reactive and outside-determined’ (Weichselgartner & Kelmen, 2014, p. 252).

These different understandings of resilience, each with its own nuances and intricacies, make it difficult to identify an overarching and conceptually clear application of resilience to specific shocks (Pendall et al., 2010). Subsequently, as colleagues and myself observed, it is not easy to implement resilience in practice (van der Vaart et al., 2015). We noted that resilience is often used as a panacea to various problems, with the resilience term running the risk of becoming a heavily contested buzzword (see also O’Hare & White, 2013; Shaw, 2012). Therefore, Porter & Davoudi (2012, p. 329) argued, ‘resilience should command our attention [...] [as] concepts that have the potential to transform the framing of planning problems and interventions deserve further analysis’.

This thesis provides a critical perspective on the value of arts-based community activities for resilience-building. The thesis follows the extended notion of resilience as described above and, in accordance to its focus on communities, it focuses on *community resilience*. To this end, the thesis draws on the definition by Magis (2010, p. 402), who argued that community resilience concerns:

‘the existence, development and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise. Members of resilient communities intentionally develop personal and collective capacity that they engage to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community, and to develop new trajectories for the communities’ future’.

It must be noted, though, that there is no universally agreed definition of community resilience, which, actually, might be a good thing according to Wildling (2011). He argued that this ‘means that local people can be free to come up with the definition that works for them [...] ultimately, it doesn’t really matter what this work is called: what matters most is that it helps people future-proof their communities on the basis of agreed values’ (p. 4).

1.3 Arts-based community activities

This thesis is dedicated to the value of arts-based community activities for the “future-proofing” of communities. As noted above, in recent years, there has been increasing attention for the value of the arts for communities in general, with scholars pointing to a broad range of (community) benefits associated with the arts. Brice & Fernández Arconada (2018) focused on “socially-engaged art” in particular, which they placed in the expansion from the arts beyond galleries *into* society. Quoting Bruguera (2011, n.p.), they noted: ‘we [artists] do not have to enter the Louvre or the castles, we have to enter people’s houses, people’s lives, this is where *useful* art is’ (emphasis added). Before elaborating on *why* arts-based community activities can be useful in light of community resilience, some background on “the arts”, “arts-based community activities” and “participatory community arts” is given.

Similar to resilience, “the arts” can also be a confusing term as it means different things to different people (Kay, 2000). Crossick & Kaszynska (2016) observed that work on “cultural value” – ‘the value associated with people’s engaging with and participating in art and culture’ (p. 13) – has tended to be driven by the case for public funding, leading to a focus on the subsidised arts. In their report on the value of arts and culture they broadened the scope of the discussion and also considered the commercial, amateur and participatory arts, because ‘after all, [these] are where most people find their cultural engagement’ (p. 7; see also Ramsden et al., 2011; Wali et al., 2002; Walker et al., 2002). In line with this, this thesis also takes on a broader perspective of the arts, paying attention to the presence of various artists in our case-study village (e.g. visual artists, a goldsmith) and the local places connected to the arts (e.g. podium venues), to activities such as the annual arts weekend and performances in which the community members themselves are involved (see Chapter 3 and 4). To capture this broader perspective, this thesis adopts the term “arts-based community activities”.

Special attention is paid to *participatory community arts* (see Chapter 2). These fall within a recent surge of artistic interest in ‘collectivity, collaboration, and direct engagement with specific social constituencies’ as Bishop (2006, p. 178) noted. There is a broad range of participatory arts practices and different understandings about what participatory art is (Lowe, 2000). Simply put, participatory community arts involve a collective method of art-making in which (professional) artists work together with a community. In line with the “usefulness” of the arts that Brice & Fernández Arconada (2018) referred to, participatory community arts are, in practice, often initiated in the form of arts projects that aim to use “art” as a tool for human or material development (Guetzkow, 2002). Such projects are frequently designed in the context of a larger community development goal, such as improving the image of a

neighbourhood or stimulating a sense of community among neighbourhood residents. The intention is that the involved community members develop themselves and gather knowledge, skills and/or insights – benefits which, subsequently, extend beyond the individual and positively impact the broader community (see Ernstman & Wals, 2013; Matarasso, 2007). Concerns around the “instrumentalisation” of the arts are sometimes expressed though (see, e.g., Brice & Fernández Arconada, 2018; Hawkes, 2001; Khan, 2010; McCarthy et al., 2004; Mulligan et al., 2006). Here, it is noted that the utility and “instrumental” benefits of the arts receive too much attention at the expense of the aesthetic value and other “intrinsic” benefits of the arts. This issue is further reflected on in Chapter 6.

1.4 Arts-based community activities & community resilience

Several scholars argued that the everyday life-world and knowledge available within communities should be incorporated when planning for community development or resilience (see, e.g., Brice & Fernández Arconada, 2018; Reichel & Frömming, 2014; Steiner & Markantoni, 2013; Stuiver et al., 2013; van der Vaart et al., 2015). In order to develop community resilience, Skerrat & Steiner (2013) argued, community members must be able to actively engage in building the capacity to thrive in an environment characterized by change. In this regard, Manzo & Perkins (2006) noted that people’s emotional commitment to their community places influences their ability and willingness to address local problems. They regarded these bonds as critical to the wellbeing of communities and argued that ‘it is essential for those working in community improvement and planning to better understand those emotional connections to place, how they are fostered, and how they might lead to action and effective participatory planning processes’ (p. 348). In this regard, “social” aspects such as place attachment, community identity, community cohesion and social capital are also significant in resilience thinking (Folke et al., 2010; van der Vaart et al., 2015).

Arts-based community activities can enhance the links between people, their community and their surroundings and, in this way, contribute to community resilience. As Shaw (2003, p. 1) stated with regard to deprived communities: ‘the arts do not offer a magic potion, but they can question beliefs and ambitions and help individuals and communities take a new direction’. Stocker & Kennedy (2011), for instance, observed that the arts can act as a catalyst to sustainable action. They concluded that the arts can help people to explore and develop their sense of identity and belonging, which may subsequently, lead to care and stewardship. In this regard, Stocker & Kennedy (2011) assigned the arts as having additional value to “cognitive scientific evidence” in creating awareness and action for sustainability. They explained that ‘emotional and affective responses to the natural world and environmental concerns can be more engaging and decisive than government reports or scientific data’ (p. 99) (see also

Kelemen & Hamilton, 2015). The AHRC film *Imagining Change: Coastal Conversations* also presents a good example of the role the arts can play in communities (AHRC, 2012). It features three projects that showcase different kinds of creative engagements with environmental change in different coastal landscapes. The film aims ‘to show how we need human and natural histories, and artistic as well as scientific perspectives on coastal change’ (AHRC, 2012, n.p.). In so doing, it depicts the bridging role that the arts can play between science, policy, and the interests of people (see also Jones et al., 2012; Jones, 2013).

As noted above, the value of the arts has since recently been mentioned more explicitly in relation to building community resilience (see, e.g. Anwar McHenry, 2009; 2011; Burnell, 2012; Derret, 2008; Mulligan et al., 2006; van der Vaart et al., 2015). It is, for instance, argued that the arts are able to generate social capital and foster community participation, in this way, stimulating and empowering community members to protect and pursue their collective interests (see, e.g., Anwar McHenry, 2011; Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016; Derret, 2003; Guetzkow, 2002; Jermyn, 2001; Newman et al., 2003). In addition, as the examples above illustrate, the arts can help people to explore their sense of identity and belonging, create awareness, and stimulate action. In line with this, scholars observed that the arts can help people to communicate, explore what is meaningful to them, think differently, and envision alternative futures (Brice & Fernández Arconada, 2018; Lawrence, 2008; Shaw, 2003; Stuiver et al., 2013). This fits with the “evolutionary approach” to planning for resilience that emphasizes the ability to be proactive and self-determining (Weichselgartner & Kelmen, 2014).

The arts also provide interesting tools as part of a resilience policy that ‘is being directed towards smaller spatial scales and everyday activities’ (Coaffee, 2013, p. 333). The everyday, lived experiences of people often provide inspiration for artists, and can be used to formulate goals for, or contribute to, community development (see, e.g., Askins & Pain, 2011; Capous Desyllas, 2014). Coaffee (2013, p. 336) noted how ‘this integration of a range of resiliency practices at the local level can be seen to represent the next generation of resilience practices which planners are increasingly adopting as part of their *modus operandi*’.

By looking at the role of arts-based community activities in community resilience from multiple perspectives, this thesis generates more insight into their value for resilience-building. It draws on a participatory research project, which is further introduced below.

1.5 Research approach and methods

In order to understand the role of arts-based community activities in community resilience, a participatory research project was conducted in the village of Pingjum in the Netherlands. Below, the research approach and the research methods used are discussed and, in the section thereafter, the case-study village and the participants are introduced.

For the research project, I adopted a participatory approach. Breitbart (2012) noted that communities are often treated as if they are laboratories, being given no role in the research process and benefiting little from the results of studies conducted within their area. In contrast, my motivations for using a participatory approach were to: 1) actively engage the inhabitants in generating knowledge about their community and its resilience, using their lived experiences as basis for the study; and connected to this, to 2) contribute positively to the community's thinking about and actual resilience. This aligns with Breitbart (2012), who noted that participatory research places great value on the knowledge of those conventionally researched. In light of this, she argued that participatory research can be used 'to build knowledge of community assets and strengths as well as to identify or address problems' (p. 145). This provides input for community resilience-building, since, as Steiner & Markantoni (2013) stressed with regard to investigating resilience at a rural community level, it is necessary to capture and understand the issues that communities face.

With regard to the first motivation, through the participatory research project I aimed to gain insight into the value of arts-based community activities for community resilience. I intended to obtain a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of people's sense of place, of the issues at play in their community (as Steiner & Markantoni (2013) recommended), and of the overall context in which the local arts and artists exist. Adopting a participatory approach is helpful in this regard as this, as Pain (2004, p. 653) argued, 'is designed to be context-specific, forefronting local conditions and local knowledge, and producing situated, rich and layered accounts'.

With regard to the second motivation, through the participatory research project I aimed to contribute positively to the community's thinking about and actual resilience. This corresponds to the objective of participatory research practices to benefit the community from which the research participants are drawn (Breitbart, 2012; Diver & Higgins, 2014; Vigurs & Kara, 2017) and can be regarded as a form of "giving back" to the community (see, e.g., Fortmann, 2014; Gupta & Kelly, 2014; Salmon, 2007). As participatory research actively engages a community, it is more likely to come from and reflect lived experiences and produce more authentic, useful knowledge, and potentially, also leads to actions that address people's real desires and needs (Breitbart,

2012; Pain et al., 2015; Trell, 2013). Through the participatory research project, I hoped to stimulate the research participants to think together about places in their village, (potential) changes related to the issues at play in their community and, where deemed necessary, come up with possible solutions or ways to deal with (anticipated) changes. In addition, the participatory research project worked towards a final exhibition (see below) which aimed to also engage the broader community and generate discussion on the meanings of certain places in the case-study village.

1 The participatory approach consisted of three stages in which creative and arts-based research methods were used: walking interviews, group discussions, and a creative workshop that resulted in an exhibition in the village hall of the case-study village. This mix of methods helped me to understand my participants sensory and affective responses to their village and its surroundings, and in so doing, enabled me to go beyond cognitive ways of knowing (Lawrence, 2008). In this regard, Kelemen & Hamilton (2015, p. 22) argued that, through the use of creative methods, researchers can ‘gain a degree of immersive, embodied experience of other peoples’ “situated knowledges”’. Moreover, as Coemans et al. (2015) noted, using “artistic elements” in participatory research can stimulate participants to create ideas for their community. They stated that this very often induces community action and change, which, subsequently, is important in light of community resilience. Below, each stage of the participatory research project is shortly introduced.

The **first** stage of the participatory research project involved walking interviews, which enabled me to get to know the case-study village, the key issues at play in the community, and the participants and their personal experiences with, and opinions on, living in their village. A growing body of academic literature highlights the value of mobile methods, such as walking interviews, in terms of gaining insight into the spatiality of place experiences (Carpiano, 2009; Hitchings & Jones, 2004; Kusenbach, 2003; Lager et al., 2015; Trell & van Hoven, 2010). The capacity to access people’s attitudes and knowledge about their surrounding environment is seen as a major advantage of this method (Evans & Jones, 2011). Moreover, it is praised for allowing an informal way of interaction, making participants feel more at ease and making it easier for them to express themselves in everyday talk (Lager et al., 2015). Further, the method is credited for its ability to reduce the power imbalance between the researcher and those researched by putting the participants “in charge” (Carpiano, 2009; Ecker, 2017). During the walking interviews of my study, the participants took me on a “tour” through their village and showed, and took photographs of, the places that were meaningful to them and places which, in their eyes, were disputed in the community or were facing (potential) changes. In addition to the walking element, the interview questions probed people’s opinions on and experiences with the various arts

activities and artists in their village, the village community, and (potential) changes to the village.

The **second** stage of the participatory research project consisted of group discussions, which aimed to bring the participants together and have a further discussion on the shared and divergent meanings of particular places in their village among people of different age groups. The participants were split up into groups of mixed ages. As starting points for their discussions, the groups were presented with the photographs taken during the walking interviews and some guiding questions on the photographed places and their meanings over time. With the group discussions, I aimed to grasp how certain places in the village are seen and valued in the community. In addition, in light of my project's aim to contribute to the community's (thinking about) resilience, I aimed to stimulate the participants to think about (potential) changes to their village and come up with possible solutions or ways to deal with (anticipated) changes. The group discussions can be seen as a form of focus groups, a method which has received considerable attention from a broad range of academic and applied research areas since the 1990s (Morgan, 1996; Wilkinson, 2004). Benefits of focus groups include that they often lead to the production of more elaborate accounts and can lead to insights that are unlikely to have arisen from individual interviews (see Bostock & Freeman, 2003; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Morgan, 1996; Wilkinson, 2004).

The **third** and final stage of the participatory research project involved a creative workshop that led to an one-day exhibition in the case-study village. During a hands-on creative workshop, the participants were further engaged by asking them to visualize the meanings they assigned to certain places in their village. In this regard, Walsh et al. (2013, p. 121) argued that arts-based research is 'founded on the idea that the arts are useful as a means to engage in research as a participatory act that allow those involved to more directly express their voices through artistic media with the goal of enhanced self-expression'. The participants received assistance from four students from the Minerva art academy in Groningen in order to visualize some of the "stories" attached to certain places in their village that had been collected during the first two project stages. A few weeks later, an one-day exhibition of the participatory research project was organized in the village hall. Here, the artworks that were created during the creative workshop were presented, together with an overview of the photographs taken during the walking interviews. The exhibition aimed to engage the broader community and generate discussion on the meanings of certain places in the case-study village, in order to contribute to the community's (thinking about) resilience. In this context, several scholars have noted that creative and arts-based research can make research findings more accessible for a broader non-academic audience and provoke changes in their understanding (see, e.g., Capous Desyllas,

2014; Coemans & Hannes, 2017; Foster, 2012; Hamilton & Taylor, 2017; Kara, 2015; Kelemen & Hamilton, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2011). Eisner (2008, pp. 6-7), for instance, observed that involving the arts in research can ‘provide deep insight into what others are experiencing’ by ‘promot[ing] a form of understanding that is derived or evoked through emphatic experience’. Mitchell et al. (2011) noted that this can help to open people to the existence of different experiences and views, creating a broader perspective and a deeper awareness of “other”. This, they noted, will make people more prepared to relate to their community and to take action in it.

Participatory research attempts to reverse conventional assumptions about who owns and benefits from research and to minimize the gap between the researcher and participants (Pain, 2004). However, there are different levels / degrees of participation (see, e.g., Arnstein, 1969; Hart, 1992; White, 1996). In the participatory research project in Pingjum, my role as researcher was to provide a framework for the project, by determining the methodology and research themes. This, for instance, meant that I designed the interview guide and organized the group discussions, creative workshop and exhibition. In addition, I conducted the data analysis. The participants’ extent of participation varied throughout the three stages of the project, and increased from stage one (the walking interviews) to stage three (the creative workshop). During the walking interviews, they were “in charge” of the route and the places they wanted to show, talk about and photograph (and how) (see also Carpiano, 2009). During the group discussions, the participants chose the photographs they wanted to discuss further. This is one way in which the control over a group’s interaction can be shared more and which, subsequently, can enable participants to develop those themes that they consider as most important (Wilkinson, 2014). During the creative workshop, the participants decided for themselves with whom they wanted to collaborate and chose a means to express themselves (within the possibilities of the available materials and time). In the aforementioned ways, the control over the data generation and outcomes of the project was partially shifted from the researcher to the participants themselves (see also Vigurs & Kara, 2017). In Chapter 6 I provide a further reflection on the research approach and ethical issues.

Creative and arts-based research methods, such as those described above, are nowadays successfully adopted by researchers from various disciplines (see Coemans & Hannes, 2017; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Woodgate et al., 2017). However, Coemans & Hannes (2017) observed a lack of methodological reflection on arts-based methods and, in this light, called for discussions about the process and implications of these methods. This thesis contributes to the discussion on the value of creative and arts-based research methods to academia by reflecting on the conducted participatory research project and its three project stages (Chapter 5).

1.6 Case-study village and the participants

The participatory research project described above was conducted in Pingjum, a village in the province of Friesland in the northern Netherlands. Pingjum is situated along the Wadden Sea coast and is surrounded mainly by agricultural land (see Figure 1, p. 41). Approximately 600 people are living in Pingjum. The inhabitants include *Pingjumers* (people who were born and raised in the village), other Frisians (who moved from within the province to Pingjum) and “incomers” (people who moved to Pingjum from outside of Friesland). Many communities, as noted, face economic, social and environmental challenges (e.g. unemployment, depopulation, extreme weather events). Pingjum is also experiencing some of these challenges. For instance, over recent decades, many of its facilities have disappeared (such as the bakery and supermarket). Nevertheless, the village still has an active village life with many associations, such as the *kaats*-association (*kaatsen* is a typical Frisian sport) and an orchestra². Furthermore, compared to other villages in the (northern) Netherlands, Pingjum has a relatively large presence of artists and hosts many cultural activities. These range from exhibitions and music performances to community arts projects, and involve both professional artists and people who engage in art as a hobby (including musicians, visual artists, graphic designers and a goldsmith). A part of these activities is purposefully intended to contribute to the inhabitants’ sense of place and to a sustainable future of the village and, in this light, have a deliberate participatory character (see also Chapter 3, section 4.3). Pingjum is also home to the artists’ association *Kunst Achter Dijken* (Art Behind Dikes) to which many artists in Pingjum belong. This association organizes an annual arts weekend during which the artists can exhibit their work throughout the village. All these artistic activities have been noticed beyond the village’s boundaries and led to Pingjum having a reputation as an “artist village” in the media (e.g., van Santen, 2013).

The participants for the participatory research project were recruited in several ways. Posters were put up at key places in the village (e.g. at the school and pub), flyers were distributed door-to-door throughout the village and a promotional presentation was given at the annual meeting of the village’s interest group. In addition, an online blog about the project³ was created and snowball sampling was used. In total, 28 inhabitants participated in the project. The participants included thirteen men and fifteen women from different age groups (below 25 years, between 25 and 65 years, and 65 years and above) and both *Pingjumers*, other Frisians as well as “incomers”.

1.7 Research aim and thesis outline

The aim of this thesis is to explore the value of arts-based community activities for resilience-building. By looking into this matter from several perspectives, insight

² See <http://www.dorppingjum.nl/>

³ See <https://onderzoeksprojectpingjum.wordpress.com/>

into their role in community resilience is generated. This study's focus on arts-based community activities can be viewed in the context of resilience policies that strive to include the everyday life-world and knowledge available within communities, and in light of the growing interest in the value of the arts for communities in general.

The thesis consists of a collection of published and submitted articles and is divided into six chapters. Each chapter addresses an aspect of the relation between arts-based community activities and community resilience:

Chapter 2 establishes the link between participatory community arts, *social capital* and community resilience. I discuss two participatory community arts projects in order to illustrate the various dimensions of social capital that participatory community arts can generate (bonding, bridging and linking). The chapter elaborates on how this contributes to the resilience of the communities where the projects took place, giving more insight into the value of participatory community arts for community resilience.

Chapter 3 presents an analysis of the various impacts of the arts on communities by highlighting when and how they can have binding and dividing effects on a community. In the discussion, it pays attention to the sense of community that the arts generate, the meeting opportunities they provide and how the community is engaged by some artists.

Chapter 4 zooms in on the role of the arts in people's coping with (potential) place change in light of wind energy developments. It elaborates on the effects of the arts on people's emotional connections to the landscape – the memories, beliefs, meaning and knowledge they associate with the landscape – and the expression of people's attachments through actions. This chapter presents an elaborated example of how artists can be key players in people's interpretations of, and subsequent coping with, (proposed) place change, which underlines the role of the arts in people's responses to (proposed) projects.

Chapter 5 reflects on the participatory research project that was conducted in light of this study. It provides more nuanced, concrete insight into the value of creative and arts-based research methods for researchers. The chapter elaborates on how the three project stages (comprising walking interviews, group discussions, and a creative workshop that resulted in an exhibition) contributed to producing *multifaceted knowledge*, with each project stage providing another facet of this study's topics.

Chapter 6 presents an overview of the main findings from the study and discusses three issues with regard to resilience-building and arts-based community activities, and to creative and arts-based research methods. The chapter also provides a reflection on the research approach.